

Tourism Triangle Development Zone: Exploring the Habal-Habal Transportation Services

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the significance of *habal-habal*, one of the most famous motorcycle public transport services, operating in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone (TTDZ) in Iligan City, Philippines. Using a qualitative method, views from *habal-habal* drivers, barangay officials, tourism representatives, and police officers focused on the aspects of safety, regulation, and service quality were gathered. The results emphasize how mobility aided by *habal-habal* contributes to the areas' economy, livelihood, and even local safety. Along with these advantages, unregulated business, safety challenges, inconsistent pricing, and oversight limits are some of the issues that need to be addressed. Suggested recommendations that stakeholders proposed include forming associations for drivers, setting standard fares, providing continuous safety training, and enhancing sponsoring agency collaboration. The conclusions advocate policy choosing strategies and action plans that address formally integrating *habal-habal* public transport to fully utilize tourism and community development potential. Such recommendations are useful for local government authorities, tourism developmental planners, and researchers dealing with the enhancement of informal transport systems in this context.

KEYWORDS: Habal-habal transportation, informal transport systems, tourism development

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Philippines' transportation is levelling up that could help tourists and visitors steer from one destination to the other (Abraham Hostels, 2023). Primarily this public transportation includes buses, vans and jeepneys. But some tourists tend to shy away from the hectic public transportations in the metro and prefers skipping to more serene places in the country like the barangays and towns, wherein smaller versions of public transportations are exclusively seen.

Comparably, in the Iligan City's Tourist Triangle Development Zone, composed of three barangays namely Barangay Maria Cristina, Barangay Ditucalan and Barangay Buru-un which are essential to the city's tourism influx, public transportation options of regular sight, in both rural and urban regions in the Philippines, is also an everyday picture in the area. In fact, *habal-habal*, which is a motorcycle with an extension at the back to carry more passengers is popularly known and use for moving people and goods between the mentioned barangays.

However, despite the popularity, practicality and widespread operations of *habal-habal* throughout province's municipalities, issues arise and problems are posited. These unofficial public transits operate unregulated, contributing problems in the community, relating to lack of regulations governing use and safety of both drivers and passengers. Thus, this research sought to address such difficulty and concerns of the operating features of this unofficial method of transportation and provide guidelines to develop tourism transportation services.

2.0 THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives that collectively offer a wide-ranging lens for understanding the role of this transportation services, *habal-habal* in the tourism development zone: the Transport-Tourism Interdependence Theory, the Self-Organization and Efficiency of Informal Transport Networks, and Stakeholder Theory.

The Transport-Tourism Interdependence framework stresses the mutual relationship between transport systems and tourism development. Key contributors such as Miossec (1977), Prideaux (2000), and Lohmann & Pearce (2012) emphasize how transportation facilitates tourism growth and shapes the destination's appeal, availability and competitiveness. In the setting of the Tourism Triangle Development Zone, *habal-habal* services are analysed as vital components of the tourism value chain, enhancing mobility, accessibility, and overall visitor experience.

The Self-Organization and Efficiency of Informal Transport Networks framework, based on the work of Mittal, Timme, and Schröder (2024), offers a new and more appreciative understanding of informal transport systems like *habal-habal*. Instead of

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seeing these services as disorganized, this perspective recognizes its ability to adapt, meet the local transport needs and make strong community ties both in sustainable and practical ways. It highlights how *habal-habal* thrives responsively and flexibly in challenging and unfavourable environments. Using this framework helps to better understand how these services efficiently operate, scale, and integrated effectively into local tourism and mobility systems.

The third theory, Stakeholder Theory was originally proposed by Freeman (1984) and expanded in tourism by scholars such as Sautter & Leisen (1999) and Aas et al. (2005), Stakeholder Theory enables the study to examine the diverse interests and influences of all groups affected by or contributing to *habal-habal* services—drivers, tourists, local government units, residents, and tourism businesses. It aids and supports analysis the dynamic of power, teamwork, and involvement in planning, ensuring there is inclusion in transport policies, it is considerably sustainable and responsive to the needs of the tourism and community.

Together, these theoretical frameworks allow the study to explore *habal-habal* transportation from both structural and human-centered perspectives. They offer a solid foundation for analysing how informal transport services operate within a tourism development context and how stakeholder engagement can inform effective, inclusive policy-making.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

While *habal-habal* transportation plays a crucial part in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone, there remains a partial understanding of how different stakeholders—such as *habal-habal* drivers perceive its influence on tourism, everyday mobility, and community life. Important issues surrounding safety, regulation, and service quality have yet to be carefully examined, along with the available opportunities and possible interventions that could improve the productivity and long-term capability of these informal transport services. This study aims to bridge these knowledge gaps by exploring stakeholder perspectives, identifying key challenges and opportunities, and gathering recommendations to enhance *habal-habal*'s contribution to tourism development and the overall well-being of communities in the zone. Specifically, it seeks:

1. How is the role and influence of *habal-habal* drivers and the *habal-habal* transportation services perceived within the Tourism Triangle Development Zone?
2. What are the key challenges and opportunities faced by *habal-habal* drivers regarding the safety, regulation, and quality of *habal-habal* transportation services in the tourism zone?
3. What improvements or interventions do stakeholders suggest to enhance the effectiveness, safety, and sustainability of *habal-habal* transportation services to better support tourism development and community well-being in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone?

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the *habal-habal* drivers and key stakeholders' perceptions and experiences within the Tourism Triangle Development Zone. Participants included purposively selected *habal-habal* drivers, who are affiliated and are active members of various associations within Barangays Ditucalan, Maria Cristina, and Buru-un, along with barangay officials, tourism office representatives, and local police officers, providing diverse perspectives on the transportation service.

Ethical protocols were followed, with formal permissions obtained from local authorities. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were submitted to the Barangay Captains of the mentioned Barangays, the City Tourism Office, and the Chief of Police to ensure formal approval and support for the research activities and to help secure access to necessary documents and coordination.

Before conducting interviews and group discussions, the researchers obtained the participants consent. Consent for audio recording was requested and granted prior to the sessions, following ethical qualitative research guidelines. Oral consent was documented.

The collection of data was conducted mainly through group sharing discussions among the *habal-habal* drivers and other stakeholders, this allowed the participants to share experiences and insights collectively. The researchers personally collected the completed interview notes and recordings to maintain confidentiality and the data were then transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. How is the role and impact of *habal-habal* drivers and the *habal-habal* transportation services perceived within the Tourism Triangle Development Zone?

Responses	Axial Code	Theme
"It is our livelihood... we all do this for a living..." - Habal-Habal Driver	Livelihood	Economic Necessity Essential Mobility Solution

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<i>"...these are the means of transportation we can ride in this area, especially going up there, not unless if you have a private car, but if you don't have then it is habal-habal."</i> - Barangay Representative	Accessibility	Community Support
<i>"...they will traverse the road going up, ...the presence of habal-habal which is more convenient"</i> - Tourism Office Representative		
<i>"yes, they report here. They report here because as a livelihood, they were given livelihood, they would really submit report here."</i> - Barangay Representative	Social Fabric	
<i>"...being look outs on our area, on what to do and what not to do, what we can do with our association, ... We are really trying our best to avoid untoward incidents ... and we need to be vigilant as well of the safety and security of the community..."</i> - Habal-Habal Driver		

The results show the role and the impact of *habal-habal* drivers and the transportation services offered within the Tourism Triangle Development Zone. It is perceived as complex and significant in its role as its presence exceeds simply moving passengers from one place to another, but rather have hinted on a vital aspect of daily life. Based on what the respondents shared, three main themes emerged, Economic Necessity, as an important source of livelihood; Essential Mobility, providing much-needed access to areas; and Community Support, where *habal-habal* drivers are seen being part of the social fabric, offering help beyond transportation.

In terms of Economic Necessity, *habal-habal* driving is essentially regarded as an important source of livelihood for many local residents. Local residents in a sense that these *habal-habal* drivers are constituents of the three barangays of the tourism zone. The statement from a *habal-habal* driver, *"It is our livelihood... we all do this for a living..."*, highlights the sector as one of the barangay's income generators. This economic importance is reinforced by the barangay representative's remark that drivers regularly report their activities and receive livelihood support, indicating formal recognition and integration of *habal-habal* operations into local economic frameworks. This livelihood function is vital as an alternative employment opportunity, thus positioning *habal-habal* driving as a key economic pillar supporting families and communities (Shivachi, 2020).

Regarding Essential Mobility Solution, the accessibility theme highlights *habal-habal*'s necessary role in providing transportation, especially in geographically challenging areas within the zone. The barangay representative's remark, *"...these are the means of transportation we can ride in this area, especially going up there, not unless if you have a private car, but if you don't have, then it is habal-habal,"* this stresses the inadequate access and availability of other transport modes like jeepneys and pointed the reliance on *habal-habal* services for every day movement and hustle.

Correspondingly, the tourism office representative notes the convenience of *habal-habal* in navigating difficult routes, which is essential for both residents and tourists accessing discrete attractions. Indeed, in remote areas and where roads are inadequate, motorcycles end up as the only mobility option - or the most convenient one versus uncommon fill-and-leave services (Santiago, Villarete & Fillone, 2023). Similarly, a study by Guzman, Campo and Ignacio (2024) highlighted the indispensable role drivers serve as vital links between remote communities and essential services in rural areas like Panaytayan, Mansalay in Oriental Mindoro, wherein these "road warriors" navigate rough and dangerous terrain, ensuring access to healthcare, education, and livelihoods.

Beyond economic and functional roles, *habal-habal* drivers are rooted within the social fabric of the community. The barangay representative's comment—*"yes, they report here... they would really submit report here"*—shows that *habal-habal* drivers are not just independent operators but are part of a system of community support and accountability. This practice echoes informal governance, where drivers help the community and, in turn, receive livelihood support, fostering trust and cooperation. One *habal-habal* driver shared how they act as "lookouts" to keep the area safe, showing how deeply involved they are in maintaining order and security. Through their associations, drivers not only protect themselves but also look out for the wider community. This mirrors findings from other parts of the Global South, like Jakarta, where informal transport workers form tight-knit groups for mutual aid and safety (MIT Governance Lab, 2024). Likewise, community transport arrangements worldwide have

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been shown to offer both mobility and community support, to reduce isolation and enhance well-being (Ravensbergen & Schwanen, 2024).

Collectively, these insights show that *habal-habal* services are more than transport—they are a lifeline in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone, providing income, ensuring mobility in remote areas, and supporting community life. Their vital role highlights the need for greater support and formalization to sustain local well-being and boost tourism.

Problem 2. What are the key challenges and opportunities faced by *habal-habal* drivers regarding the safety, regulation, and quality of *habal-habal* transportation services in the tourism zone?

Responses	Axial Code	Theme
<i>“we cannot actually stop other drivers who picked up passengers and would pass by our area, we call them strikers as well”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“we can’t force them to become members if they do not want to.”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“There are those who are outside, they are called the striker, they are not part of the association... it will create chaos.”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>“one of the problems there before is that there were like rivalry among associations because there are those who will join in the queue who are not members”</i> - Tourism Office Representative <i>“...years have passed there are a lot of killings happening there. A number of habal-habal drivers have been killed, especially retired army who became driver, they were the ones who get easily “sold-out”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“...there was an incident, it was actually, a lady passenger who pillion from the city proper, they stopped by somewhere, then someone there then pointed a weapon on the driver.”</i> - PNP Representative <i>“Drivers were bickering as to who will pillion the passenger, then when the driver went back, he was not supposed to pick -up another passenger from the drop-off destination, but he did so. So, his attention was called since other drivers are on queue.”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“... they were stabbing each other because of just the misunderstanding about the passenger.”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“Here, some of them fight. They fist fight over passengers.”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>“...there were no fights in our area sir with other habal-habal driver, however there was an incident including a</i>	Competition Safety and Security Conflict	Operational Disorder Safety Variability Social Tension

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<i>“bao-bao”, the driver insisted to get inside the area and fight, it even made one of our members slapped him, it even ended in court. “</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“...will not pick up passengers because there are also associations in that area so we do not pick up passengers there returning to our area. We just pick up passengers from our designated terminal or area”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“We also just pillion passengers for drop-off destination to Buru-un, we are not allowed and will not pick up passengers from Buru-un.”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“It is unavoidable sir, because they (strikers) would really pick up passengers. We can’t avoid that in the high way,”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“Barangay is not the agency to approve the travel orders...”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>“Yes, sir, and even other drivers who are not strikers, when they get to see the passengers are quite well-off or somehow, they can take advantage of with the innocence when it comes to fare, they would ask for higher fare.”</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“This are one of the problems the we receive in our end are complaints from tourists like fares are expensive”</i> - Tourism Office Representative <i>“... there are a lot of complaints from passengers that they have been collected with overpriced fare, as to which actually are not from habal-habal drivers who are from the associations but from what are called strikers.”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>“...it is difficult to trace, especially with foreigners, when they reach the destination - Tinago, in the drop off, they will ask for higher fares.”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>“There is no coordination with the barangay... Their tariff depends on them.”</i> - Barangay epresentative	Regulatory Gaps and Jurisdictional Issues Fare irregularity and Overcharging	Limited Oversight and Enforcement Challenge Lack of Standardization and Consumer Protection
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Habal-habal remains a vital part of Philippine transport particularly in rural and tourism areas (de Souza e Silva, 2022). While it provides essential mobility and generate income, *Habal-habal* drivers in tourism zones face tough competition from unregulated operators, safety risks, weak regulation, fare disputes, and operational chaos—challenges made worse by social tensions and limited passenger protections.

Emerging is the theme on Operational Disorder wherein, the issue of “striker” drivers—those who operate outside official associations—stands out as a major challenge in the *habal-habal* transportation services. As one driver shared, “*we cannot actually*

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stop other drivers who pick up passengers and pass by our area, we call them strikers.” Without regulation, misunderstanding and disorder is caused in the operation, in fact this concern was echoed and heightened by a barangay representative, *“They are not part of the association... it will create chaos.”*

Though other drivers are encouraged to be members of the association, some chose to decline the invitation *“that would be difficult to answer, because we can’t force them to become members if they do not want to”* a *habal-habal* driver shared. The voluntary nature of joining association memberships gives limitation to regulate and enforce discipline. Consistent with the findings of the study that in the rural Philippines the informal motorcycle taxi sectors often encounter challenges and difficulties dealing with unregistered operators, that would lead to rivalry and fragmented delivery of services (Bayben-De Guzman, Magboo-Campo, & Ignacio, 2024).

Tensions also run high between drivers and associations. According to a tourism office representative, *“there were rivalries... some would join the queue who are not members.”* These turf wars can escalate quickly, with several respondents mentioning fights, stabbings, and legal disputes sparked by competition over passengers. To reduce conflict, some drivers voluntarily stick to specific routes or terminals. As one explained, *“We only drop off passengers in Buru-un—we don’t pick up there.”* While this self-regulation helps, it is not enough to fully address the deeper issues of competition and lack of coordination, frequent clashes over passenger pick-ups often escalate into physical altercations, reflecting the absence of effective conflict resolution systems. This highlights how intense competition in informal transport sector can lead to violence, disrupt services, strain community relationships and result in compromising the stability and safety of the operation.

Safety concerns extend beyond road accidents; it is closely connected to the operational disorder and competition which could result to threats and violence among drivers and from external factors. Safety Variability marked by violence, targeted attacks, and inconsistent safety practices, respondents conveyed frequent violent incidents involving *habal-habal* drivers, including killings and threats. A driver stated, *“...years have passed, there are a lot of killings happening there. A number of habal-habal drivers have been killed, especially retired army who became drivers, they were the ones who get easily ‘sold-out’”*. News reports support these accounts, including the 2025 stabbing of a *habal-habal* driver in Cagayan de Oro (Yap, 2025) and the 2023 shooting in Calbayog that killed a driver and two others (Desacada, 2023). Retired military personnel who become *habal-habal* drivers seem especially at risk, possibly because of perceived ties or lingering disputes. A police representative recalled an incident where a driver was held at gunpoint by a passenger: *“...a lady passenger pillion from the city proper, they stopped somewhere, then someone pointed a weapon at the driver.”* These cases highlight the daily security threats drivers face on the job, impacting the *habal-habal* drivers’ well-being and the will to continue his service (Alonto and Paje, 2020).

Data indicate that conflict and social tension are common within the *habal-habal* community in the zone. Respondents report recurring disagreements over passenger pick-ups, territorial boundaries and queuing priorities, which often escalates to physical confrontations. One *habal-habal* driver shared, *“Drivers were bickering as to who will pillion the passenger, then when the driver went back, he was not supposed to pick-up another passenger from the drop-off destination, but he did so. So, his attention was called since other drivers are on queue.”* This highlight contested informal rules on passenger pick-ups and queuing, with the absence of clear guidelines fuelling driver conflict over limited passengers. More conflicts have erupted into violence. Another *habal-habal* driver recounted, *“...they were stabbing each other just because of the misunderstanding about the passenger.”* Similarly, a barangay representative confirmed, *“Here, some of them fight. They fist fight over passengers.”* Such incidents highlight the volatility of competition in the sector, where disputes over economic opportunities quickly escalate into physical confrontations, threatening driver safety and community peace.

The fourth theme illustrates limited oversight and enforcement challenges faced in regulating *habal-habal* operations within the tourism zone, which directly impact service quality and fare fairness. Drivers report self-imposed operational boundaries to avoid conflicts, stating, *“...will not pick up passengers because there are also associations in that area so we do not pick up passengers there returning to our area. We just pick up passengers from our designated terminal or area,”* and *“We also just pillion passengers for drop-off destination to Buru-un, we are not allowed and will not pick up passengers from Buru-un.”* These statements show that associations have their own informal rules on territory and routes to manage operations without government oversight. The presence of “strikers” — drivers operating independently and outside established associations — continues to be a major challenge. As one driver noted, *“It is unavoidable sir, because they (strikers) would really pick up passengers. We can’t avoid that in the high way.”* This reflects a gap in enforcement, as barangay authorities themselves admit their limited role, with one representative stating, *“Barangay is not the agency to approve the travel orders...”* As a result, many operators run without formal approval or oversight, particularly along highways and between barangays.

This regulatory gap also leads to fare inconsistencies and cases of overcharging, especially targeting tourists or passengers perceived to be affluent. A driver acknowledged, *“Yes, sir, and even other drivers who are not strikers, when they see that the passengers are well-off or unaware of the usual fare, they take advantage and charge more.”* The challenge of identifying and holding these unaffiliated drivers accountable, especially when tourists are involved, further complicates efforts to protect consumers, leading to the discussion of the last theme Lack of Standardization and Consumer Protection; wherein barangay representative highlights issues, confirming the *habal-habal* driver’s statement and admitting that *“there are a lot of complaints*

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from passengers that they have been collected with overpriced fare, as to which actually are not from habal-habal drivers who are from the associations but from what are called strikers” points to a significant problem with unregulated operators (“strikers”) who

Responses	Axial Code	Theme
“Anytime they can apply for membership. That is why we always encourage them to be members because from time to time when they pillion passengers, the primary responsibility is our passenger, the passenger is our priority and whatever may happen we are answerable.” - Habal-Habal Driver “Those who are not under the association cannot drive there. But if you would like to queue there then be a member of the association.” - Barangay Representative	Association Membership	Order and Accountability
“... since what we made cannot be approve yet in MTFRB since habal-habal has not been regulated, so what we do is that we propose a tariff by acknowledgement in the barangay there to our barangay Captain.” - Habal-Habal Driver “...in our terminal we put signage something like tourism so the passengers or tourists would not find it difficult to locate.” - Habal- Habal Driver “There should be a signage put up in place... Fare tariff and places should be fair and standard.” - Barangay Representative “Fare tariff and places should be fair and standard. Should also be updated to then in their provision.” - Barangay Representative	Standardization	Fare and Route Regulation
“...as per DOT 10 also, the reason why they needed to be accredited is that may God forbid in times of accident the one that would help them is the city tourism and DOT because they have been accredited. So, meaning before they are also be accredited, they also need trainings, for example first aid, FBSE, that is one also. ‘ - Tourism Office Representative “...concerns on our time on being look outs on our area, on what to do and what not to do, what we can do with our association, those who are not from our association. We are really trying our best to avoid untoward incidents since most of our passengers in	Trainings & Seminars	Capacity Building

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<i>Ditucalan are students, and we need to be vigilant as well of the safety and security of the community since kidnapping is rampant. That is one of our look out sir.</i> - Habal-Habal Driver <i>“what I can propose regarding with the program about intel is that, we will make our habal-habal drivers our eyes and ears of the barangay, we would probably give time to visit and sit down with you. I will also propose this to our intelligence section of the station to visit the intel community to talk with the presidents of the groups sir, we actually went first at the city, we recruited habal-habal drivers as BIN, Barangay Intelligence Network,”</i> - PNP Representative <i>“You should also include LTO because it is them you mandate the law...”</i> - Barangay Representative <i>For it to have a resolution, Councilor Sweet will make a resolution for it. It will really start from the barangay.</i> - Tourism Office Representative <i>“One thing to consider also is the personal hygiene because others drive and the odor is unimaginable.”</i> - Barangay Representative	Multi-agency Collaboration Consumer Protection	Policy Enforcement Safety and Transparency
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charge excessive fares without accountability. Areas with informal motorcycle taxi services that have limited regulatory supervision often suffer from fare transparency, inconsistent pricing and ethical concerns (Santos, Santiago, Santos & Agustin, 2024).

Tracing offenders is difficult, especially when tourists are involved-as the barangay representative states, *“it is difficult to trace, especially with foreigners, when they reach the destination - Tinago, in the drop off, they will ask for higher fares”*-this

reveals a gap in consumer protection mechanisms. Santiago (2024) show that weak fare enforcement and rising costs often push drivers to charge more, especially from passengers who seem unfamiliar or in a hurry. Tourists, often unaware of standard local rates, are especially susceptible to overcharging. This issue has also been recognized by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) in Northern Mindanao, which has urged the public to report fare overcharging, acknowledging the agency’s limited capacity for enforcement (Bagumbaran,2025).

Furthermore, the statement shared, *“There is no coordination with the barangay... Their tariff depends on them,”* reflects the lack of standard fares and coordination between local authorities and *habal-habal* drivers. This gap mirrors the LTO’s 2022 warning about overcharging by unregulated motorcycle taxis, pointing to the broader issue of illegal and loosely monitored operations (GMA News Online, 2022). Ong et al. (2023) suggest raising public awareness and setting up clear complaint channels to help protect passengers and promote fair pricing.

Problem 3. What improvements or interventions do stakeholders suggest to enhance the effectiveness, safety, and sustainability of *habal-habal* transportation services to better support tourism development and community well-being in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone?

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Practical suggestions were shared and suggested to make the *habal-habal* transportation services in the Tourism Triangle Development Zone, safer, more reliable and more sustainable. These improvements purposed to better support both the growth and well-being of tourism and local communities.

Collectively, this includes, Order and Accountability, Fare and Route Regulation, Capacity Building, Policy Enforcement and Safety and Transparency.

With Order and Accountability, *habal-habal* drivers are encouraged to become members of associations to ensure the safety of the passengers as well as to warrant accountability. Only association members are to be allowed to operate in certain areas or queue at terminals, to help regulate services. A driver shared, *"We always encourage them to be members because... the passenger is our priority, and whatever may happen, we are answerable."* A barangay official reinforced this, saying, *"Those who are not under the association cannot drive there... queueing is only for members."*

Respondents also proposed formalizing fare structures through barangay-level regulation, given that national agencies like the MTRFB have yet to officially recognize *habal-habal* operations. As one driver explained, *"What we made cannot be approved yet in MTRFB... so we propose a tariff to our barangay captain."*

The standardization of fares and routes was another common theme. Both drivers and barangay representatives agreed that clear, fair, and regularly updated fare tariffs should be implemented and posted visibly at terminals and tourist sites. *"There should be signage... fare tariff and places should be fair and standard,"* noted one barangay representative and a *habal-habal* driver added, *"In our terminal, we put signage... so tourists would not find it difficult to locate."*

Capacity building through training and seminars was also identified as essential. Tourism officers emphasized mandatory accreditation that includes training in first aid, defensive driving, and safety. A tourism representative said, *"Before they are accredited, they also need trainings... for example, first aid, FBSE."* Such initiatives are supported by Department of Tourism guidelines and have shown to improve safety awareness among drivers.

Multi-agency collaboration and policy enforcement was frequently mentioned. cooperation among barangays, PNP, LTO, and the local tourism office was advocated by respondents. A representative from the barangay emphasized, *"You should also include LTO because it is them who mandate the law."* the tourism representative added, *"Councilor Sweet will make a resolution... it will really start from the barangay."*

The PNP even proposed integrating *habal-habal* drivers into the Barangay Intelligence Network (BIN): *"We recruited habal-habal drivers as BIN... they serve as our eyes and ears,"* said a police representative. *Habal-habal* drivers themselves expressed a commitment to safety, especially in areas with security risks: *"We are really trying our best to avoid untoward incidents... we need to be vigilant."*

Consumer protection and safety measures were also top concerns. Stakeholders proposed mandatory use of helmets, regular vehicle checks, license verification, and even insurance coverage. Personal hygiene and driver conduct were also raised as part of improving the overall passenger experience. *"One thing to consider also is personal hygiene,"* a barangay official remarked, *"because others drive and the odor is unimaginable."*

Finally, community engagement and transparency were seen as crucial for long-term sustainability. Suggestions included involving residents in feedback mechanisms, ensuring visible identifiers like uniforms or vests for drivers, and promoting trust and accountability in the community.

Overall, these proposed improvements—from association membership and training to policy coordination and community oversight—reflect a shared vision to transform *habal-habal* transport into a safer, more organized, and tourist-friendly service, that stress the importance of formal licensing, standardized fares, inter-agency coordination, and local engagement in improving informal transport systems in the Zone.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Within the Tourism Triangle Development Zone, *Habal-habal* transportation services provide critical mobility geographically for difficult to reach areas and contribute to community safety and support all while providing essentials for livelihood within the region. The sector struggles with major issues, however, including rampant disorganization caused by unregulated riders, safety issues, irregular fare pricing, lack of stronger supervision policies, social unrest, and weak consumer protection.

To more fully realize the benefit incorporated within *habal-habal* services in the context of tourism and local development there are advocates for more structured policies that include formal association membership, predefined fare systems, safety training protocols, multi-agency cooperation, as well as laws which are more thoroughly enforced. With these measures, the effectiveness, safety, and sustainability of *habal-habal* transportation will support the growth of tourism and the welfare of communities.

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7.0 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conclusions given, the following recommendations are listed below:

Habal-habal Drivers.

- *Habal-habal* drivers join recognized associations and actively participate in ongoing safety and customer service training. These efforts not only support regulatory compliance but also enhance the overall quality and reliability of service, thereby strengthening public trust.

1. Document & Highlight Best Practices	• Create a profile of how these associations operate (membership, activities, training schedules). • Highlight successful training programs (topics covered, feedback from drivers, outcomes).
2. Encourage LGU or NGO Involvement	• Propose a standardized certification system (like an official ID That is only controlled by the City tourism) for those who complete customer service and safety trainings. • Promote these certified drivers through barangay halls, terminals, and online registration (make a portal/QR code per driver) platforms to boost public trust.
3. Encourage LGU or NGO Involvement	• Recommend that local governments support or even require association membership for <i>habal-habal</i> operators. • Seek NGO support for expanding training efforts or conducting periodic evaluations.
4. Public Awareness Campaign	• Launch campaigns to inform commuters about the importance of choosing trained, association-affiliated drivers. • Share success stories from your research to reinforce public trust.

- Drivers are encouraged to consistently uphold safety and professionalism—by wearing appropriate safety gear, maintaining personal hygiene, and treating passengers with respect. Such practices contribute to a positive image of both the drivers and the *habal-habal* transport service, reinforcing its value as a vital support to local tourism and community development.

1. Develop a Driver Code of Conduct	• Draft a standardized guideline/manual covering: • Required safety gear (helmets, reflective vests) cleanliness and personal hygiene, professional behavior (greetings, respectful communication) • This shall be part of the training of drivers' pre-requisite of their application to be an official drier and member for their association and distribute and explain this to all drivers, especially through associations.
2. Implement Uniform Standards	• Encourage the use of standard uniforms or visible IDs to create a clean, professional look. • Seek funding or sponsorship from local businesses or LGUs for basic gear kits.
3. Integrate Tourism Training	• Provide short modules on basic tourism awareness, such as: How to welcome tourists Proper conduct during rides Knowing and promoting local destinations
4. Community Awareness Campaign	• Launch a public information drive to highlight the role of well-trained <i>habal-habal</i> drivers in supporting tourism.

- Include posters, social media content, and barangay forums to raise awareness.

Government Units (LGUs).

- Local Government Units strengthen the regulatory frameworks and provide support for *habal-habal* operations. This would include establishing and implementing clear guidelines and policies for accreditation, standards on fare and tariffs, including the regular training for *habal-habal* drivers.

1. Establish an LGU-Led Accreditation System	• Develop a formal registration and accreditation process for <i>habal-habal</i> drivers and their units. <i>Requirements may include:</i> - Valid government-issued ID - Proof of association membership - Proof of completed safety and service training • Provide accredited drivers with IDs or decals for easy identification.
2. Create and Enforce Fare Matrix	• Work with driver associations to develop a standardized fare matrix based on distance, time, or route difficulty. • Display fare charts in terminals or on the back of units for transparency. • Review and update fares regularly to reflect fuel prices and cost of living.
3. Provide Regular Training and Seminars	• Allocate LGU funds or partner with TESDA and DOT for: - Safety training - Customer service and tourism readiness - First aid or basic emergency response + Include mandatory refresher sessions at least once a year.
4. Support Infrastructure and Terminals	• Designate safe and organized terminals or pick-up/drop-off points. • Install signage, shade, and seating to professionalize the experience for passengers.
5. Implement Monitoring and Grievance Mechanisms	• Create a feedback hotline or form (online and on-site) where the public can report complaints or commendations. • Assign a staff to coordinate with the barangay-level coordinators to handle concerns and ensure compliance.
6. Promote Inter-Agency Collaboration	• Coordinate with the Tourism Office, Transportation Office, and PNP to align policies on safety, traffic, and tourist readiness.

- LGUs should foster active stakeholder engagement by promoting collaboration among driver associations, tourism offices, enforcement agencies, and the community. Involving drivers, tourists, and residents in decision-making and feedback processes will help create more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable transport solutions that align with both tourism growth and community needs.
- PNP should take an active role in maintaining order within *habal-habal* operations by supporting the enforcement of local regulations, monitoring terminals, and addressing conflicts involving unregistered “striker” drivers. Through regular patrols, mediation, and collaboration with LGUs and driver associations, the PNP can help prevent violence, ensure commuter safety, and promote peace and discipline in transport zones.

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1. Designate PNP as Oversight Partner in Transport Order and Peacekeeping	- Assign Tourist Police as liaisons to monitor terminals and conflict hotspots. PNP officers can be tasked to: a. Mediate disputes on the ground b. Respond quickly to altercations c. Conduct visibility patrols to deter violence and illegal operations
2. Implement PNP-Supported Registration and Sticker System	Collaborate with the PNP in validating the ID/QR for recognized <i>habal-habal</i> drivers and units.
3. Establish Community-Based Peace and Order Task Force	Form a joint task force composed of: - PNP - Barangay Peace and Order Council (BPOC) <i>Habal-habal</i> leaders - LGU transport officers
4. Create Clear, Enforceable Protocols for Violations	In partnership with the PNP, LGU can draft local ordinances or guidelines that: - Penalize aggressive “striker” operations - Set rules on queuing, territory, and pick-up points - Provide due process for reported violations (warnings, mediation, sanctions)
5. Use PNP Support for Community Peacebuilding	Encourage PNP officers to attend community assemblies and driver meetings not just for enforcement but also as peacekeepers and mediators.

Tourists. Tourist are encouraged to choose *habal-habal* drivers who are accredited or visibly identified to ensure safer and more reliable service. Being informed about standard fares and routes, and sharing feedback with local authorities to help enhance and contribute to the overall experience and service improvement of the transport sector.

Future Researchers. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of study by exploring not just qualitative insights but also using quantitative methods or comparing *habal-habal* with other informal transport options. This can offer a more complete picture of its impact on tourism and community life. It would also be helpful to look into how policies and interventions play out over time—to check and evaluate what was working, changing and how the drivers and passengers’ needs are evolving as to which these efforts can support solutions to improve informal transport in tourism areas.

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